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# Exhibit Description for The Invisible Truth: An Exposition of Gender Violence and Our Demands for Change

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**The Invisible Truth: An Exposition of Gender Violence and Our Demands for Change**  
**LALIS/WGSS 497: Embodied Politics of Latin America**  
**Monday, April 16, 2018, 4-7 p.m., Lower Forum**

The photography exhibit *The Invisible Truth* was the final project for the upper-level LALIS/WGSS seminar “Embodied Politics in Latin America: Race, Gender, Sex, and Performance,” taught by Dr. Mariela Méndez in the Spring of 2018. “Embodied Politics in Latin America” was a class focused on the imaginative and political possibilities of performance art in Latin America, where a varied repertoire of embodied practices has helped stage resistance against acts of violence towards women. In this context, discussion during the first part of the semester focused heavily on the alarming wave of feminicides in the region. The term “feminicide” was coined by Mexican feminist Marcela Lagarde to refer to crimes that were motivated by a gender dynamic where women, on account of their gender, were abused, raped, tortured, dismembered, burned, etc. in the hands of men. During the second part of the semester, class discussion expanded to incorporate the sexual assault crisis on U.S. college campuses. Once the discussion moved from Latin America into students’ own reality, instead of being personal it focused on larger systems of oppression, on institutional violence, on the university as responsible for shaping structures of inclusion and exclusion. They could see more clearly how the university “acommodates certain bodies and not others” as Sara Ahmed points out (*Living a Feminist Life*, 2017) and how it “hears” some bodies and not others.

Viewing performance as having the potential to open up a space for the inscription of the material realities of lived trauma, students worked on a final performative intervention meant to foster a meaningful conversation around sexual assault in the UR campus. With this aim in mind, they interviewed faculty, students, and staff about gender violence on campus, collected all of the timely warnings on sexual assault received by the UR community, and came up with their own definition of gender violence:

“We understand gender violence as physical, mental, or emotional harm done with malicious intent towards an individual because of their gender. An individual does not need to conform to the binary gender system for it to be considered gender violence, though gender violence can be used to reinforce the binary gender system and attempt to make an individual conform to said system. Gender violence includes actions on a wide spectrum, such as sexual assault and rape, stalking, coercion, etc”.

Informed by class readings, interview findings, data collected, and their own definition, students photographed places on campus where gender violence occurs more frequently, and they used the narrative of the UR timely warnings and deconstructed it to create their own narrative. In addition, they provided their own manifesto of demands for change, which was distributed among participants.